

HEALTH CARE FOR HOOSIERS

Indiana Checkup Plan

The Indiana Checkup Plan (House Enrolled Act 1678) incorporates several provisions that I've long advocated to improve our health care system. By increasing the **tax on cigarettes**, it will reduce smoking and **prevent** many cases of **cancer, heart disease and emphysema**. The dollars generated will allow us to **expand coverage** for thousands of Hoosiers who currently cannot afford health care insurance.

The Plan also includes provisions to lower the costs of health care. It gives **tax credits** to companies that offer **wellness programs** to their employees. A very important provision will allow dependent children to be carried on their parents' health insurance plan until age 24, instead of the current age of 22.

For uninsured Hoosiers who will not receive coverage under the Checkup Plan, an additional component will **make health care insurance more affordable**. Companies will receive a tax credit to set up payroll deduction for employees who have to purchase their own health insurance. These "Section 125" plans can **save workers 25 to 40 percent off the cost of their premiums**.



The Indiana Checkup Plan will:

- Cover up to 132,000 uninsured working Hoosiers
- Expand the CHIP program to cover up to 40,000 more Hoosier children
- Extend health coverage to more than 15,000 expectant mothers
- Allow dependent children to remain on their parents' insurance until age 24
- Provide small businesses tax credits for offering employees weight loss and smoking cessation programs
- Establish tax credits for employers who provide health insurance plans



State Representative

Terri Austin

✓ Protecting Children and Families

School Funding and New Laws
Benefit Kids and Families



✓ Supporting Efforts to Reduce Property Taxes

Increased Deductions Will
Assist Homeowners



✓ Affordable Healthcare

Making Health Care More Affordable
for Hoosiers and Small Businesses



2007 Session Report

Helping Hoosier Families



Representative
Terri Austin

Needs Your Opinion

Contact Rep. Austin:

Phone: 800-382-9842

E-mail: H36@in.gov

Website: www.in.gov/H36

Representative Terri Austin

Indiana House of Representatives

200 W. Washington St.

Indianapolis, IN 46204

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State Representative Terri Austin

New Laws Protect Indiana’s Children and Families

In this session, we passed important legislation to improve our child protection system. I was pleased to support several bills which build on our previous efforts and take additional steps for our kids.

House Enrolled Act 1503 improves the work of our child fatality review team, an entity that was created three years ago. The new law will ensure that doctors with appropriate training perform autopsies for suspicious child deaths. This will help law enforcement officials properly identify deaths from abuse and bring the perpetrators to justice.

And by determining the causes for all unexpected child deaths, the fatality review team will be better able to tell us how to prevent future deaths.

Senate Enrolled Act 311 minimizes the disruption in the lives of abused children. When children need to be separated from their abusers, courts commonly remove the child from the home. The Act requires judges instead to remove the abuser from the home, whenever that would be feasible.

By doing so, courts will be acting in the best interests of the children. Kids removed from their homes may bounce from one foster home to another, only aggravating the trauma that they suffer as a result of abuse. By allowing children to stay in their own homes, we avoid the need for a child to adjust to a new family, a new school and new playmates.

House Enrolled Act 1001 funds 400 new caseworkers for the Department of Child Services.

House Enrolled Act 1509 protects renters who are victims of domestic violence, sex offenses or stalking by allowing them to have the locks changed on their unit. In the past some landlords have prohibited a tenant from taking such actions putting victims further at risk.



Investing in the Future

Indiana’s students are big winners with the new state budget approved in the 2007 session. I felt it essential to compensate for the school funding cuts in the 2005 budget that I voted against. I am pleased that we were able to work with the Senate to boost funding for K-12 education by almost four percent each year of the biennium.

In addition to the significant K-12 increases, the new budget contains the first substantial commitment to bringing voluntary full-day kindergarten to all of Indiana. Full-day kindergarten has been a long-time priority for me, and the budget bill provides more than \$90 million to expand this critical early education program over the next two years.

When it takes effect on July 1, the balanced budget will increase state funding for our colleges and universities by more than 4.5 percent. Additionally, the budget includes \$4.8 million for the Anderson and Muncie Ivy Tech campus renovation plans and \$850,000 for the new Purdue Statewide Technology Program campus at Flagship Enterprise Center in Anderson. The budget also funds new life sciences initiatives for Indiana University and Purdue University.



A Guide to the Property Tax Refund

Why a Rebate Check?

The state will not collect the money earmarked for increased 2007 Homestead Credits until November. Many counties had already mailed their 2007 tax bills and recalling them to issue new tax bills would create confusion and additional costs on local counties.

Will I Receive a Rebate?

All homeowners will automatically receive one unless they are delinquent on taxes.

When Will I Receive the Rebate?

All eligible taxpayers should receive a check in late 2007 or early 2008. Some homeowners who pay their property taxes through escrow may have their rebate sent directly to their escrow agent or lender.

Who Will Issue the Rebate?

The state will transfer the funds for the rebate to your county government, and county officials will calculate your rebate and mail a check.



Supporting Efforts to Reduce Property Taxes

More Work Needed

As a result of House Bills 1001 and 1478, homeowners may see only a fraction of the anticipated increase in property taxes in 2007 and 2008. Legislators and homeowners were alarmed when reports released earlier this year indicated that some property owners could see increases of up to 25 percent or more on their property tax bills.

Property Tax Relief

I have been listening to your concerns and have been taking action to soften the impact of the rising property tax burden. First, I supported legislation that provides **\$550 million in additional property tax relief over the next two years**. Homeowners will benefit from \$300 million in increased 2007 Homestead Credits in the form of a rebate sent later this year (see sidebar for more information on the rebate). In 2008, another \$250 million worth of Homestead Credits will be applied directly to tax bills. This new property tax relief is estimated to reduce the 2007 average homeowner tax bill increase from 25 percent to 7.7 percent.

Less Reliance on Property Taxes for Local Government Funding

Second, we established a more permanent, long-term framework for reducing local government’s reliance on property taxes. County officials can both cut property taxes and pay for critical public safety services like police and fire protection by raising local income taxes. The County Option Income Tax (COIT) council may adopt an income tax to reduce property taxes. The maximum rate is one percent and the money can be distributed in three ways. It can be used to increase the property tax replacement credit, which means it will reduce the property taxes of all property owners. It can be used to increase the homestead credit, which means it will reduce the property taxes of homeowners only. Or, it can be used to increase a third credit, which applies to homesteads and residential rental property, whether it is classed as residential (small rental units) or commercial (large apartments). The county council may select any combination of these three tax relief formulas.

Applying all of the one percent Local Option Income Tax to only homestead properties could potentially reduce the homestead tax throughout Madison County by 49 percent (almost half).



LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Gov. Daniels has now given local units of government until October 1 to decide whether to increase local income taxes to offset future property tax bills.

Representative Terri Austin

2007 Legislative Survey Results



Compiled here are the results of a survey completed by 1,070 of the citizens in our district. Thank you to everyone who responded to the survey either online or by mail. I appreciate your input!

Sincerely,

Terri J. Austin

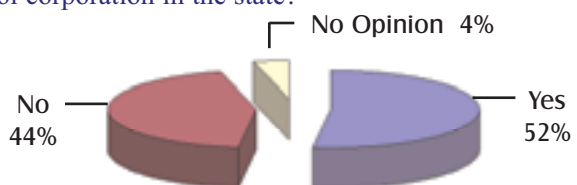
Question #1: Top priorities for 2008-2009 state budget spending.

1. Property Tax Relief (300)
2. Affordable Health Insurance (257)
3. Job Creation and Economic Development (188)

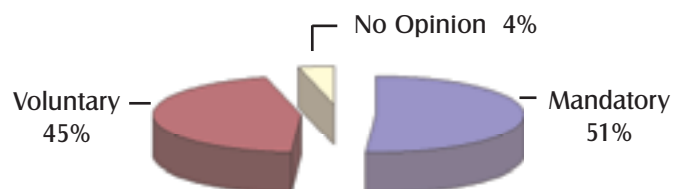
Question #2: Top priorities for 2008-2009 state budget cuts.

1. Corrections Programs (307)
2. Higher Education (250)
3. Medicaid and Other Support Services (162)

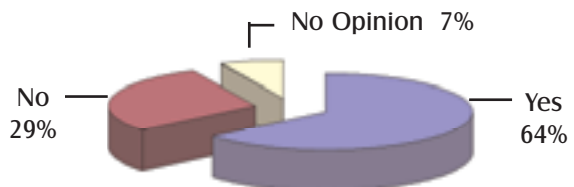
Question #3: Do you support the creation of full-day kindergarten programs that would be offered by every local school corporation in the state?



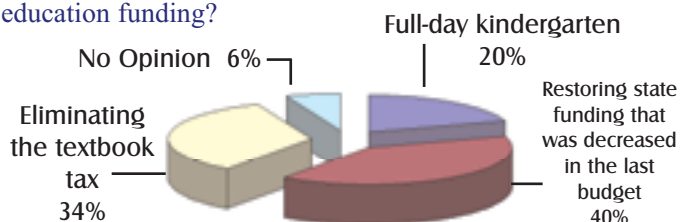
Question #4: Should kindergarten attendance be voluntary or mandatory?



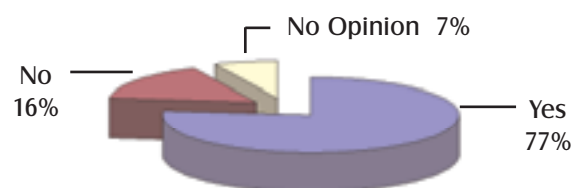
Question #5: Do you support elimination of textbook fees that all families of schoolchildren in Indiana must pay?



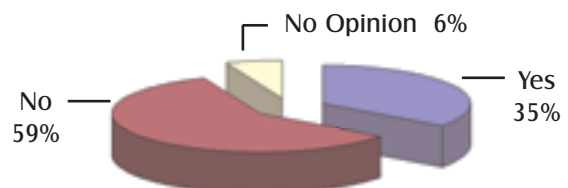
Question #6: What is your highest priority in K-12 education funding?



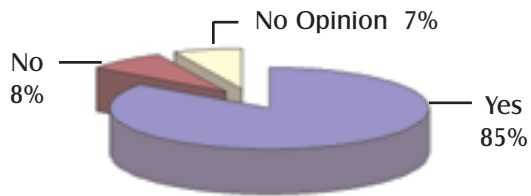
Question #7: Would you support placing license branches under the jurisdiction of the Indiana Secretary of State to provide more accountability?



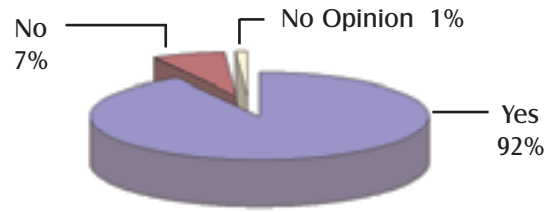
Question #8: Do you support or oppose the governor's outsourcing of major state functions and services to private companies?



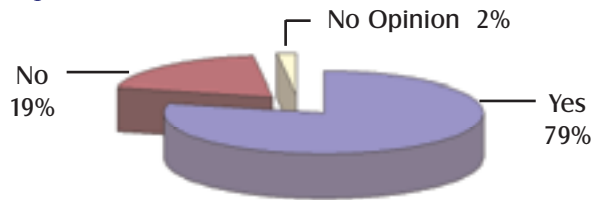
Question #9: Should the legislature have the right to oversee any efforts to privatize state programs and services in order to ensure Indiana taxpayers are being protected?



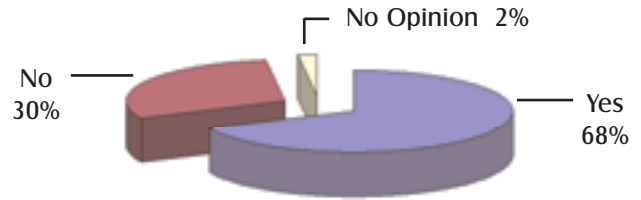
Question #10: Do you support tougher penalties for companies that knowingly hire illegal immigrants?



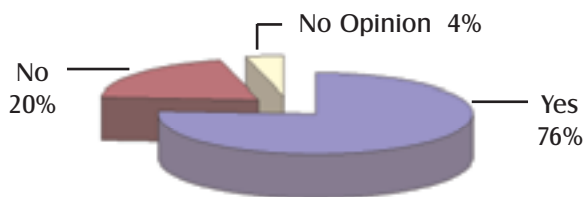
Question #11: Should these companies [that knowingly hire illegal immigrants] be ineligible for Indiana economic development incentives?



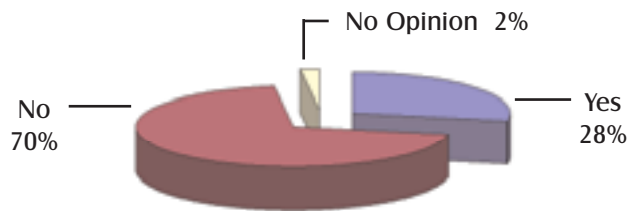
Question #12: Do you believe that people who ride in trucks, station wagons or SUVs should be required to wear seatbelts?



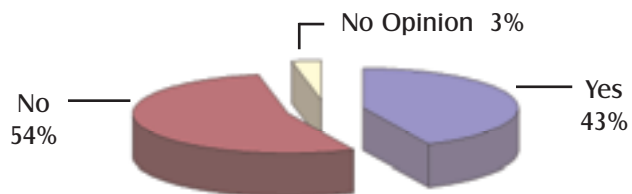
Question #13: Should local units of government (cities, towns, counties, schools) be given greater financial flexibility to determine how to fund operations under their control?



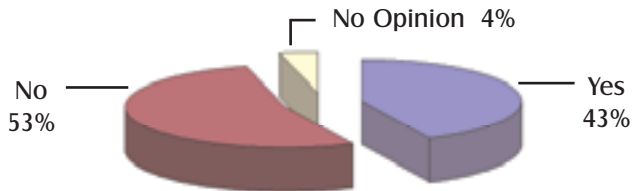
Question #14: Should local governments be allowed to raise local income taxes?



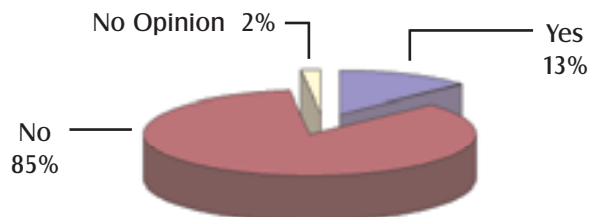
Question #15: Should local governments be allowed to raise local food and beverage taxes?



Question #16: Should local governments be allowed to raise local innkeepers' taxes?



Question #17: Should state or local government be allowed to take private property through eminent domain in order to build a privately-operated toll road?



Question #18: Do you believe the Hoosier Lottery should be privatized in exchange for a one-time payment that would be used to fund college scholarships?

